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DEPT FOR WHA/FO DAS MADISON  
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DEPT FOR USOAS  
STATE PASS TO USAID/LAC -- CARDENAS AND BATLLE  
NSC FOR FISK AND GARCIA  
SOUTHCOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/21/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [VE](#) [NU](#)  
SUBJECT: ORTEGA SUPPORTS CHAVEZ, CLAIMS U.S. BEHIND  
ASSASSINATION PLOT

REF: CARACAS 1271

Classified By: Amb. Robert J. Callahan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega publicly supported Hugo Chavez's decision to declare persona non grata the United States ambassador and accused the United States of being behind a plot to assassinate the Venezuelan President. His public statements were part of a coordinated strategy of supporting his closest Latin American ally while also attacking the United States and human rights organizations critical of his leadership. END SUMMARY.

U.S. BEHIND ALLEGED PLOT

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¶2. (SBU) On September 21, Ortega publicly accused the United States of plotting to assassinate his main ally in the region with the complicity of members of the Venezuelan armed forces. At the inauguration of a water sanitation project, Ortega thanked the Government of Venezuela for its assistance and pledged the solidarity of the people of Nicaragua "before the plans that are being developed to assassinate" Chavez. Ortega answered his rhetorical question, "who wants to kill them (Chavez and his allies)? The darkest forces of the empire (the United States) and the darkest forces of Venezuela." He remarked that these "darkest forces" want to assassinate Chavez because "he is a good man, on the side of the poor, and wants to unite Latin America."

¶3. (SBU) Ortega claimed that the alleged plot would use a combat aircraft from the Venezuelan armed forces in the service of "the empire and the oligarchy" to bomb Chavez, location and kill him. Ortega added that it did not matter to the alleged plotters whether "100, 200 or 500 people were left dead." He also claimed that "this was the plan and they (Chavez) managed to discover it and it is not new." Recalling the Venezuela coup d'etat of 2002, Ortega remarked, "they tried to kill him (Chavez) and the people went out into the streets and rescued him from the hands of those who had held him prisoner and had sentenced him to death." Ortega continued by saying that the enemy was always conspiring against the poor people because "they want the wellbeing, the paved streets, the potable water, electricity, wealth...for themselves" and for the poor people "hunger and unemployment, dusty streets, (and the) need for water."

SUPPORT FOR EXPELLING THE U.S. AMBASSADOR

14. (SBU) Ortega also reaffirmed his solidarity and support of Chavez's decision to declare persona non grata the U.S. ambassador and to adopt measures against those who are "conspiring" against the government of Venezuela. Invoking Pope John Paul II, Ortega referred to the fight against "savage capitalism" by the poor, saying that the "poor people cannot wait" and that Venezuelan financial aid was meeting the needs of poor Nicaraguan families "in these basic services of water." Ortega continued his praise of Chavez by "expressing our solidarity" to the Venezuelan president and "our support for the decisions taken to declare non grata and to expel from Venezuela those that have been conspiring under the protection of their diplomatic mission, others who entered (the country) as tourists and began a dirty campaign against the government." According to Ortega, Chavez had no other choice but to expel them from the country. Ortega added, "we welcome and accept with open arms those who respect us, but if a foreigner comes to try to do us harm...if they want to stay in Nicaragua, they should respect Nicaraguans" and "if they do not obey, there is nothing left to do but to kick them out as the Venezuelan government has done."

15. (C) COMMENT: Ortega continues to support Chavez unconditionally. Indeed, he has gone farther than Chavez, who only expelled the U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela in solidarity with Evo Morales' act in Bolivia, and did not make any specific allegation against him.

CALLAHAN